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LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. – 37. (Cancelled)

38. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

 a plurality of electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the plurality of physical areas of each of the gaming machines;

 each of said lock mechanisms being physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

 control circuitry independent of the gaming machines, said control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of said lock mechanisms via a communications link for controlling operation thereof;

 a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of each of the gaming machines for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines is authorized; and

 a data input device coupled to the processor, said data input device enabling a person to input at least personnel identification data that identifies the person,

 the processor being operable to compare said personnel identification data inputted by the person with said personnel identification data stored by said storage

media that authorizes access by certain, identified personnel to certain designated gaming machines of the plurality of gaming machines and to a plurality, but not all, of said physical areas of said designated gaming machines, and cause the lock mechanisms of the plurality of physical areas to move to the unlocked position to allow access to those plurality of physical areas of the designated gaming machines when the personnel identification data inputted by the person matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium, wherein at least one of the lock mechanisms includes a solenoid having a plunger, the plunger being moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

39. (Previously Presented) A method of remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of different, physical areas of a plurality of gaming machines , the method comprising:

providing each of the plurality of physical areas with an electrically operable lock mechanism which is physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the particular gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of the particular gaming machines for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines is authorized;

controlling the operation of the lock mechanisms via a processor independent of the gaming machines , said processor being coupled to each lock mechanism;

inputting at least personnel identification information into a data input device that identifies a person seeking access to a plurality of said physical areas of the plurality of gaming machines ;

comparing said inputted personnel identification data with at least said stored personnel identification data; and

remotely, electrically unlocking a plurality of the lock mechanisms of only those plurality of physical areas, less than all of said physical areas, of the particular gaming machines, for which the person seeking access is authorized when said inputted personnel identification data matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium.

providing at least one of the lock mechanisms with a solenoid having a plunger, wherein the plunger is moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

40. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for remotely selectively controlling access to a plurality of physical areas of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

a plurality of electrically operable lock mechanisms, each respectively associated with one of the plurality of physical areas of each of the gaming machines and each lock mechanism physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry independent of the gaming machines, said control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of the lock mechanisms of the gaming machines via a communications link for controlling operation thereof; and

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of certain designated gaming machines and the physical areas, if any, of the designated gaming machines for which a person seeking access to the gaming machines is authorized;

the processor being operable to compare personnel identification data inputted by a person into a data input device with said personnel identification data stored by said storage medium that authorizes access by certain, identified personnel to at least one of the physical areas of each of the designated gaming machines, and cause the lock mechanisms of the physical areas at each of the designated gaming machines to which access is authorized to move to the unlocked position to allow access to those physical areas of the designated gaming machines when said inputted personnel identification data matches any of the personnel identification data stored by said storage medium, wherein at least one of the lock mechanisms includes a solenoid having a plunger, the plunger being moveable between a retracted position when the solenoid is energized to enable a mechanical key to be used to unlock said lock mechanism, and an extended position when the solenoid is de-energized to prevent the mechanical key from being used to unlock said lock mechanism.

41. - 50. (Cancelled)